

U.S. Engagement with Young African Leaders



“The bottom line is this: Africa’s future belongs to its young people...We need young Africans who are standing up and making things happen not only in their own countries but around the world...We want this to be the beginning of a new partnership and create networks that will promote opportunities for years to come.”

– President Barack Obama

Over the past year, the United States Government has pursued a long-term program of engagement with young Africans. The wide-ranging effort has been led by the White House and the U.S. Department of State in partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Peace Corps, and has involved three dialogues.

Scope of the Initiative

The initiative began with President Barack Obama’s August 2010 Forum with Young African Leaders in Washington and has continued with a multitude of programs throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Additional youth-targeted programs continue to showcase the efforts of young African leaders, encourage two-way dialogue on pressing challenges, and build skills and networks to create new opportunities for Africa.

President’s Forum with Young African Leaders

In August 2010, the U.S. Government brought 115 young African leaders to Washington, D.C. from over 40 African countries for an interactive forum with American counterparts and U.S. government officials. The Forum focused on key themes of America’s partnership with African nations including youth empowerment, good governance and economic opportunity. President Obama hosted a town hall meeting at the White House with the young leaders to discuss their vision for Africa for the next 50 years. This Forum sparked partnerships, networks, and collaborations that continue to create positive change in the region.

Dialogue with Young African Leaders

In May 2011, the U.S. Government hosted “The Dialogue with Young African Leaders” - a targeted series of youth engagement programs throughout Africa. The month-long Dialogue featured over 200 programs and activities in 37 countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa and helped showcase the efforts of young Africans in the field, expand skills-sets, and strengthen networks. The

programs included moderated discussions, digital video conferences with U.S. counterparts, in-country leadership and new media skills training, cultural events, issue-oriented public advocacy campaigns, and interactive seminars.

Objectives of Engagement with Young African Leaders

- Showcase a new generation of young African leaders who are shaping the continent’s future.
- Reinforce the U.S. commitment to fostering two-way dialogue between the United States and African youth.
- Help young people in Africa develop skills and networks to build brighter futures for their communities and countries.

African Women Leaders Forum

In June 2011, the U.S. Government hosted a two-day workshop and conference for women from across Africa in Johannesburg and Soweto, South Africa. The Forum featured 76 young African women leaders. First Lady Michelle Obama addressed the conference and participated in some of its activities. The Forum promoted the role of women in all spheres of African life and focused on themes such as leadership, women’s empowerment, and community service.

Looking Toward the Future

The U.S. Government is committed to working with young African leaders to better understand their aspirations for the continent and to collaborate with them on common interests. This ongoing engagement with them will continue into the future, building upon past fora, dialogues, and existing networks.